



SUSAN TUSA/Detroit Free Press

Stacy Fano, 32, of Clinton Township works on her laptop in the jury room at the Macomb County Courthouse in Mt. Clemens on Tuesday. "It's excellent," she said, "not losing any time from work." Wireless access in the jury room is newly accessible at the court.

County jurors now can pass the time online

By DAN CORTEZ
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Wireless access lets them work while on duty

Jury duty didn't give Dan Dear an excuse to get away from work for a day.

The Chesterfield Township man owns a marketing firm. So being out of the office for jury duty at the Macomb County Courthouse in Mt. Clemens used to mean a lost day. But thanks to a new program that has wireless Internet in the jury room, he can still do business.

"This does help a lot," Dear, 42, said Tuesday morning while he waited with about 150 other prospective jurors. "You have to do your duty, but it doesn't mean that your work goes away, especially for business owners."

The free service debuted Jan. 3. Jurors who bring their own laptops are given a password that will log them onto a

server that provides wireless access in the jury room, said deputy county clerk Todd Schmitz. The password expires at 5 p.m. each day.

The county incurred a one-time \$500 setup cost and will pay a monthly rate of \$65. County Clerk Carmella Sabaugh said the expense is worth the benefit.

"The public loves it," she said Tuesday. "We always wanted to get them hooked up. We've been wanting to do this for a long time."

Schmitz said jurors began inquiring about Internet access a few months ago. Some jurors bring laptops with them and wanted to be able to get on the Web. Beyond providing the abil-

ity to work, the Internet is also a way to pass the time.

Stacy Fano, 32, of Clinton Township was able to use the Internet service to remotely log into internal servers at her purchasing job while she waited in the jury room Tuesday morning.

"You don't have to miss any time in the office," she said. "It's been great."

Lewis Breeding, 35, of Macomb Township lauded the service.

"It's just as fast as the high-speed Internet," he said.

Schmitz said the wireless network is kept separate from the county's Internet servers and is confined to the fifth-floor

jury room.

"This way we don't have to worry about those security issues," he said.

As many as 20,000 county residents go through the jury room annually, Schmitz said. With that many people looking for ways to pass as many as eight hours a day, providing the Internet just made sense.

"People did come to us, especially when we had people here for four days," Sabaugh said. "This is a public office. We're here to make things better."

Future jury duty notices will inform residents that wireless Internet access is available.

Those wanting to use the service must have a laptop that has built-in wireless capabilities or a wireless network card.

Contact DAN CORTEZ at 586-469-1827 or cortez@freepress.com.